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INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Description:

Infill development is the process of developing vacant, underused, or abandoned properties within existing cities, towns, or neighborhoods, including the undeveloped portion of existing residential double lots if the owner is willing to sell the undeveloped portion. Communities typically have such properties, which, for various reasons, have been passed over in the normal course of development or urbanization. Infill development can be utilized to respond to a range of community needs and to achieve various community objectives and goals—such as additional housing, community centers, retail establishments, civic resources, playgrounds, economic stimulus projects, and many others.

Ideally, infill development involves more than the piecemeal development of individual parcels; instead, a successful infill development program should focus on crafting complete, well-functioning neighborhoods.¹ For example, effective infill development can be a valuable tool in helping to promote a community's *livability*—creating overall residential densities high enough to support desired alternative transportation choices and a wider variety of convenience services and amenities; providing alternative choices in housing to meet the diverse needs and preferences of community residents; returning cultural, social, and recreational opportunities to a community; providing gathering places for increased interaction among community residents; and improving or restoring economic and social vitality to older town/city centers and neighborhoods.

Reference:

¹ "Infill Development: Completing the Community Fabric," *Planning Tools and Resources*. Seattle, WA: Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington: Working Together for Excellence in Local Government.

Benefits:

For residents:

- Meeting consumer needs: The dispersed, small areas characteristic of many infill spaces create opportunities to provide successful housing alternatives (such as elder cottages, grandfamilies housing, "small houses" for single individuals, a shared living residence, and others) that are needed and desired by a community's many discrete, but smaller, consumer groups that do not comprise a sufficient market size to justify a traditional housing project or complex.

For residents and communities:

- An infill development program is a useful tool for increasing the *livability* of a community—offering opportunities and spaces to add customized housing, services, and amenities that can be tailored to individual neighborhoods.

For communities:

- An infill development program makes efficient use of a community's total land area.
- Infill development uses the existing land in developed areas more resourcefully, which discourages sprawl on the suburban or rural fringe.
- Infill development is a smart growth tool because the necessary infrastructure is already in place to serve the project.
- A well-designed infill program can project a positive image of density and mixed-use development.

Impediments or barriers to development or implementation:

- Neighborhood residents may fear denser development, and may view the infill project as changing the existing community character.
 - Overall success of infill development requires attention to the design of infill projects, to ensure that the new development fits the existing community context, meets neighborhood needs, and gains neighborhood acceptance.
- It is often more difficult and expensive to purchase and assemble land in desirable infill locations.
- Existing local zoning and building set-back requirements (see Relaxed/Flexible Building Set-Back Requirements in the Resource Manual) may not allow the necessary densities, and may require additional effort to use an alternative zoning tool to achieve the goal of the infill project.

Resource—examples and ordinances:

- "Infill Development: Completing the Community Fabric" (April, 2009), *Planning Tools and Resources*. Seattle, WA: Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington—Working Together for Excellence in Local Government. Numerous links providing extensive, substantial information on all aspects of infill development, including statutes, ordinances, examples, case studies, evaluation studies, guidebooks, design guidance, barriers, and more.
<http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/planning/infilldev.aspx>.
- Living Smart Program (skinny homes)—affordable single-family homes on narrow infill lots, Portland, Oregon.
http://www.huduser.org/portal/casestudies_iss1_2.html.
- Urban Land Institute (2005), "Rochester, New York: Strategies for Re-Creating the Urban Core," *An Advisory Services Panel Report*. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute. <http://www.rochesterdowntown.com/news/PDF/ULIreport.pdf>.
- (October, 2001), *Models and Guidelines for Infill Development: Managing Maryland's Growth*. Baltimore, MD: Maryland State Department of Planning.

http://planning.maryland.gov/pdf/ourproducts/publications/modelsguidelines/infillfinal_1.pdf.

- Scott Siegel, et al. (September, 1999), *The Infill and Redevelopment Code Handbook*. Salem, OR: Oregon State Department of Transportation.
<http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/docs/publications/infilldevcode.pdf>.
- City Council—Downtown Action Team (2000), *Downtown 2010 Sector Development Plan*." Albuquerque, NM: City of Albuquerque—Planning Department; Downtown Action Team.
<http://www.cabq.gov/planning/publications/down2010/preface.pdf>.
- (January, 2009), *Special Use Infill Options and Design Tools Available Through the Neighborhood Plan Combining District*. Austin, TX: City of Austin.
<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/plan-amendment-resources> .
- Dover, Kohl, and Partners (1996), "Port Royal Traditional Town Core," *Port Royal, South Carolina Master Plan for Infill Development*. Coral Gables, FL: Dover, Kohl, and Partners.
<http://www.doverkohl.com/project.aspx?id=49&type=0>.
<http://www.doverkohl.com/files/pdf/Port%20Royal%20SC.pdf>.

Resource—written and web:

- Great Communities Collaborative: A unique cooperative relationship among several San Francisco Bay Area nonprofit organizations: Greenbelt Alliance, Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California, TransForm, Urban Habitat, East Bay Community Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and the national nonprofit Reconnecting America—for the purpose of shaping plans for specific transit-oriented developments in Bay Area communities and encouraging resident participation in planning for those developments: <http://www.greatcommunities.org/>.
 - Great Communities Collaborative—*Toolkit* (updated: 2009):
 - "Greenbelt Alliance Compact Development Guidelines":
<http://www.greatcommunities.org/toolkit>: scroll down the Table of Contents to Chapter 5—Appendices; click on "Greenbelt Alliance Compact Development Guidelines."
 - Guidelines for Individual Infill Projects:
<http://www.greenbeltalliance.org/downloads/whatwedo/Individual%20Guidelines.pdf>.
- Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (2010), *Infill Design*. Portland, OR: City of Portland, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability:
<http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm?c=34024>.
 - *The Infill Design Toolkit: A guide to integrating infill development into Portland's neighborhoods*:
<http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm?c=49254&>.